

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, everyone knows the top issue on the mind of most Americans right now is jobs. What I have said is that the one thing we could all do right now to help spur job creation is to pass the three free-trade agreements with Panama, Colombia, and South Korea. Republicans in Congress have been urging the President to pass these agreements for nearly 3 years. Yet they have languished on his desk for no good reason. It is time to send them up so we can act. At a moment when 14 million Americans are looking for work, it is indefensible for the White House to demand a vote on trade adjustment assistance as a condition for action.

Still, I and others have agreed to allow it so we can finally move ahead on these vital trade deals. It is my expectation, based on the understanding I have with the administration, that the President will stop dragging his feet soon and submit all three of them for a quick approval. At long last, U.S. businesses that want to expand here at home but which have been held back by the President's refusal to act will be able to compete on a level playing field in these markets, and it will create jobs in the process. These agreements, while helpful, are not enough.

In order to create the kind of jobs we need, we need more trade deals than these three. That is why I have been a strong advocate for granting this President the same trade promotion authority every other President has enjoyed since 1974. Also known as fast track, TPA creates expedited procedures for congressional consideration of trade agreements that the administration negotiates with our trading partners. TPA has long had bipartisan support and led to numerous trade agreements with 17 new countries during the Bush administration, including the 3 we hope to consider shortly.

Unfortunately, Democrats and their union allies allowed TPA to expire in 2007. This President has made no effort whatsoever to revive it. Without TPA, the United States will likely never agree to another deal. The unions will make sure of that. We have seen what happens next. After the North American Free Trade Agreement passed in 1993, TPA expired, and in the 8 years that followed the United States did nothing, while other countries moved ahead integrating themselves in the global economy. We cannot let that happen again. We cannot miss more opportunities to compete in foreign markets with U.S.-made products just because unions do not want to.

Consider this: According to the Business Roundtable, while our trade agen-

da has lapsed, the European Union is negotiating 16 trade agreements with 46 countries. Japan is negotiating 7 agreements with 38 countries, and even China is negotiating 11 agreements with 18 countries.

What about the United States? We have signed none since this administration began, and we are actively negotiating only one, a pact that will open opportunities to American businesses and workers across the Pacific Rim. I and many of my colleagues and many of our allies overseas want to know what is the President's plan to enact that one deal if he does not ask for, has not received, and does not even seem to want trade promotion authority; is he ready to watch all these opportunities vanish? We cannot allow these opportunities for American jobs to simply drift away.

We must reauthorize TPA, along with TAA. Historically, TPA and TAA have moved together; in 1974, when TPA was created; in 1988, when it was reauthorized; and again in 2002, when TAA was expanded to its current prestimulus levels. That is why I am offering an amendment that will grant this President trade promotion authority through 2013. It is the same term the Democrats are insisting we reauthorize trade adjustment assistance. My amendment builds into it the same accountability to Congress and the need to consult with Congress that previous TPAs have had. It is based on legislation offered by a bipartisan pair of trade leaders, Senator PORTMAN and Senator LIEBERMAN.

We are going to hear Democrats arguing we have not had enough time to carefully consider this expansion of trade promotion authority and work on the negotiating objectives we generally include in the bill. I would remind them I first called for TPA last May. Since that time, I have heard nothing from my Democratic colleagues or the White House about their interest in renewing this authority. There has been zero outreach. When I suggested I would be willing to support an extension of TAA if we could reauthorize TPA, there was nothing.

In my view, if the White House will not show leadership on this issue, if they are too worried about owning other free trade agreements or as being seen by some of their allies as promoting them too aggressively, it is my view we ought to help them get there. That is why I am offering this amendment to show the world some in Congress are ready to move forward and lower the barriers that keep American goods out of foreign countries and which American consumers all benefit from our integration into the world economy.

With 14 million Americans out of work and thousands of Americans looking for opportunities to sell American-made goods around the world, we cannot afford to wait, as we did on these three free-trade agreements, while the administration makes up its mind that

American jobs are more important than appeasing their union allies.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The Senator from Tennessee.

STEPPING DOWN FROM REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I thank my friend of 40 years, the Republican leader, for being here for these remarks I am about to make. I thank my colleague, Senator CORKER, and several other of my Republican colleagues for, on very short notice, coming to the Senate floor for these brief remarks.

Next January, following the annual retreat of Republican Senators, I will step down from the Senate Republican leadership. My colleagues have elected me as Republican conference chairman three times, and I will have completed 4 years or the equivalent of two 2-year terms at that time. My reason for doing that is this, stepping down from the Republican leadership will liberate me to spend more time trying to work for results on issues I care the most about. That means stopping runaway regulations, runaway spending, but it also means confronting the timidity that allows health care spending to squeeze out support for roads, support for research, support for scholarships, and other government functions that make it easier and cheaper to create private sector jobs.

I wish to do more to make the Senate a more effective place to address serious issues. For 4 years in our caucus, my leadership job has been this: to help the leader succeed, to help individual Republicans succeed, to look for a consensus within our caucus, and to suggest a message. I have enjoyed that. However, there are different ways to offer leadership in the Senate, and I have concluded, after 9 years, this is now the best way for me to make a contribution.

It boils down to this: Serving in this body, as each one of us knows, is a rare privilege. I am trying to make the best use of that time while I am here. For the same reason, I plan to step down in January from the leadership. I will not be a candidate for leadership in the next Congress. However, I do intend to be more, not less, in the thick of resolving issues, and I do plan to run for reelection in the Senate in 2014.

These are serious times. Every American's job is on the line. The United

States still produces about 23 percent of the world's wealth, even though we only have about 5 percent of the world's people. All around the world people are realizing there is nothing different about their brains and our brains and their using their brain power to try to achieve the same kind of standard of living we have enjoyed in the United States.

As a result of this, some have predicted that within a decade, for the first time since the 1870s, the United States will not be the world's largest economy. They say China will be. My goal is to help keep the United States of America the world's strongest economy.

There are two other matters that are relevant to the decision I am making that I would like to address. The first is this: When I first ran for the Senate in 2002, I said to the people of Tennessee—and they were not surprised by this—that I will serve with conservative principles and an independent attitude. I intend to continue to serve in the very same way.

I am a very Republican Republican. I grew up in the mountains of Tennessee and still live there in a congressional district that has never elected a Democrat to Congress since Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States. My great-grandfather was once asked about his politics. He said: I am a Republican. I fought for the Union, and I vote like I shot.

I have been voted five times by Tennessee Republicans to serve in public office. I have been elected three times by Senate Republicans as conference chair. If I could get a 100-percent Republican solution of any of our legislative issues, I would do it in a minute. I know the Senate usually requires 60 votes for a solution on serious issues, and we simply cannot get that with only Republican votes or only Democratic votes.

Second, by stepping down from the leadership, I expect to be more, not less, aggressive on the issues. I look forward to that. The Senate was created to be the place where the biggest issues producing the biggest disagreements are argued out. I don't buy for 1 minute that these disagreements create some sort of unhealthy lack of civility in the Senate. I think those who believe the debates in our Senate are more fractious than the debates in our political history simply have forgotten American history. They have forgotten what Adams and Jefferson said of one another. They have forgotten that Vice President Burr killed former Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton. They have forgotten that Congressman Houston was walking down the streets of Washington one day, came across a Congressman from Ohio who had opposed Andrew Jackson's Indian policy and started caning him, for which he was censured. They have forgotten there was a South Carolina Congressman who came to the floor of the Senate and nearly killed, by hitting him

with a stick, a Senator from Massachusetts. They have forgotten that another Senator from Massachusetts, named Henry Cabot Lodge, stood on the floor and said of the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson: I hate that man. They forgot about Henry Clay's compromises and the debates that were held during the Army-McCarthy days. What of the Watergate debates? What of the Vietnam debates?

The main difference today between the debates in Washington and the debates in history are that, today, because we have so much media, everybody hears everything instantly. If one would notice, most of the people who are shouting at each other on television or the radio or the Internet have never been elected to anything.

It would help if we in the Senate knew each other better across party lines. To suggest we should be more timid in debating the biggest issues before the American people would ignore the function of the Senate and would ignore our history. The truth is, the Senators debate divisive issues with excessive civility.

I have enjoyed my 4 years in the Republican leadership. I thank my colleagues for that privilege. I now look forward to spending more time working with all Senators to achieve results on the issues I care about the most—issues that I believe will help determine for our next generation what kind of economy we will have, what our standard of living will be for our families, and what our national security will be.

I thank the Presiding Officer, and I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I would say to my friend of 40 years that even though there are a number of colleagues on the Senate floor, I am confident we all agree this is not a eulogy in which we are about to engage. Really, I have a great sense of relief that my friend is going to run again in 2014 and continue to make an extraordinary contribution to the Senate and to America.

When I first met LAMAR he was at the White House. I had just come here as a legislative assistant to a newly elected Senator. He had already accomplished a lot. He had been elected Phi Beta Kappa at Vanderbilt and graduated from New York University Law School. He had clerked for a well-known circuit judge, been involved in Howard Baker's first campaign, had helped him set up his first office, and that was before I met him.

Since I have met him, as many of my colleagues are already aware, it is hard to think of anybody—it is hard to think of anybody—who has done more things well. He went home in 1970 and ran a successful campaign for, I think, the first Republican Governor of Tennessee elected, certainly, since the Civil War. He ran for Governor himself in a very bad year in 1974. It didn't

work out too well. But one of the things we know about our colleague LAMAR is that he is pretty persistent. So he tried it again in 1978. He was elected Governor, reelected Governor in 1982—a spectacular record.

Then he did something very unusual. I remember knowing about it at the time. I kept up with him since we had met years before when we were in Washington. He took his entire family and went to Australia for 6 months. He put the kids in school there and actually wrote a book called "Six Months Off," which I read then. I don't know how many books Senator ALEXANDER sold, but it was a fascinating review of basically just taking a break, going somewhere else, doing something entirely new before getting back on the career treadmill that we, of course, knew he would do.

So once the Australian experience was over, this extraordinarily accomplished and diverse individual became president of the University of Tennessee. That was back when they used to play football, and then-President Bush 1 asked him to become Secretary of Education. So he was a Cabinet member.

Oh, by the way, I think I left out that at his mother's insistence he became quite proficient at piano. He is a fabulous piano player and musician. My mother let me quit. That was the only mistake she made in an otherwise perfect job of raising me. But Senator ALEXANDER's mother, by insisting that he continue to take piano, gave him that dimension as well.

So here we have a guy who has been Governor, president of his university, a member of the Cabinet and, as if that were not enough, he went into the private sector and started an extraordinarily successful business, which did very well. I expect our colleague from Tennessee thought his public career was over, but then Fred Thompson decided he wanted to go do something else. All of a sudden he was in the Senate—not just in the Senate but then became a leader in the Senate in a very short period of time.

We have had an opportunity to get to know our colleague. It is hard to think of anybody more intelligent, more accomplished, as well as more likeable than LAMAR ALEXANDER.

So I must say to my good friend from Tennessee, I am relieved he is not leaving the Senate. This is not a eulogy, but it is an opportunity for those of us who have known and admired the Senator from Tennessee for a long time to just recount his extraordinary accomplishment during a lifetime of public service. It has been my honor to be his friend, and I will continue to be his friend, and I am glad he will continue to be our colleague.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I thank the Republican leader. I am deeply grateful for his comments, with one single exception. I have great confidence in Derek Dooley. He is a fine

football coach at the University of Tennessee. They are playing very good football, and I intend to be at my usual seats at the Georgia game in 2 weeks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, I wish to say to my colleague I certainly have enjoyed his comments, and I am excited for him. I sit very close to him in the Senate, and I am with him a great deal. I do plan on keeping a cane out of the reach of my colleague for a few days.

I very much appreciate his service and leadership to the Republican Party in the Senate. I think in his position he has brought out the best in all of us in the best way he could. I am excited for him. I look at this as a great day for the Senate. It is a great day for our country. This is a great day for the State of Tennessee.

I can tell my colleague, based on the conversations we have had and the way I know my colleague, the Senate is going to become very quickly a more interesting place to serve. For all of us who have been concerned about our lack of ability to solve our Nation's greatest problems, I look at what the Senator has done today as a step in the direction toward us being able as a body to more responsibly deal with the pressing issues he outlined in his talk.

So I thank my colleague for having the courage to step down from a position that many Republican Senators would love to have. I thank my colleague for the way he serves our country. I thank him for the example he has been to so many in his public service in our State and in our country, and I thank the Senator for being my friend.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I rise today to echo the comments of colleagues earlier about the contribution of LAMAR ALEXANDER, our friend and colleague, as well as somebody who has had an impact not just on the State of Tennessee but on the United States of America. I think one of the toughest things a Member of the Congress can do is to, No. 1, step down from leadership, or, No. 2, voluntarily leave the body.

I think it says more about LAMAR ALEXANDER than any comments that can be made; that he understands where he is going, and I think he stated it very well. His contribution to the future of this country is what he is most concerned with, and that is why this country is blessed to have leaders such as he. We welcome him back into the ranks of the normal, the general population of what has been the asylum of late. I hope LAMAR will be a great influence in our ability to get the body of deliberative debate and participation back, and that is certainly his quest.

One of his passions, though, is education. I was shocked he didn't mention that in his litany of areas he would delve into. But I know earlier last week he and I and others introduced five reforms to K-12 education.

When we talk about the future, whether it is Senator ALEXANDER or myself or others, we say the future of this country is conditional upon how well we educate the next generation and how we make sure the next generation has the foundational knowledge they need to compete in a 21st-century economy.

I think it is safe to say today our record is not good. Just 70 percent of our high school seniors graduate on time. Let me say that again: 70 percent of our high school seniors will graduate on time. Many of those will never go back. They will not cross the goal line. In today's economy, their likelihood of being invited for a job interview is slim to zero.

We have Federal laws that require an employer to accept an application from whoever walks in the door. However, when it gets down to the interview process, I can assure my colleagues that when employers look at that résumé and it doesn't have high school graduation on it, they will certainly invite others who at least have that threshold of education, if not further degrees. So I think we owe it to the next generation to be candid with them and tell them that this is a minimum to have an opportunity for unlimited success.

If we ever get to a point that this is not about an opportunity of unlimited success, America will have changed greatly, and I think that is one of the passions Senator ALEXANDER has. That is why he is so involved in issues such as education and why he is willing to sacrifice leadership for greater involvement in the policies.

In the bills we introduced last week, there were two that LAMAR and I did together. Let me share with my colleagues what those bills do.

Today, we have 97 authorized programs and 59 of them are funded. They are all funded individually. That means we make money available to a State and consequently to a school district. But their requirement to access that money is they have to do exactly what we structured in the program. Many schools do not need that program, and they forego that money. Yet on the Senate floor we have debated frequently the need to get more resources into especially at-risk school districts to bolster that foundational education.

We simply leave title I alone—it is targeted at a specific population—but we take all these other 59 programs that were funded last year and meld them into two pots of money: One pot is designed for improvement in teaching and learning; the other pot is designed for safe and healthy student block grants.

You might say: Well, what if a school system does not need a fund for improvement of teaching and learning, but they do need more money for safe and healthy students? We allow 100 percent transferability between those two areas. So if a school system purely needs teaching and learning, and they

want to focus on all of that, they will take that safe and healthy student block grant money and put it over into teaching and learning. By the same token, for school systems that might not see the benefits there, but they have a growing title I population, we allow 100 percent transferability up to the title I program.

What are we trying to accomplish? We are trying to do what school systems have told us year after year, decade after decade: Give us more flexibility. Let us decide what it is we need for our students to learn. This is not about input. This is about output. This is about focusing on how we improve education to where every child crosses that goal line of success; that then the foundational knowledge base is so great that they are marketable in whatever direction our economy decides to go.

The challenge for us—a lot like what Senator ALEXANDER did today; he gave up power, a position in leadership—it means the Congress has to give up the power of deciding exactly how every school system is going to implement programs. We have to be big enough to realize that the one-size-fits-all structure from Washington does not work; that every school system in America is a little bit unique; and, yes, we recognize the fact that not every State is necessarily the best fiduciary of the funds. This legislation only requires the States to siphon off 1.5 percent of the money. We are not going to build a palace or create a bureaucracy in State capitals in education off of these programs anymore. The intent is to take this money and put it into the classroom; make sure the skills of the teacher are better; make sure, in fact, we are teaching teachers the right way to teach today.

I know we are not allowed to have electronics on the Senate floor. We hide them in our pockets real well. Kids are not allowed to have electronics in school. They hide them in their pockets real well. When we all leave where it is prohibited, this is the first thing we pull out of our pockets. We check our messages. We check sports scores. We check the news. Some of us old people make phone calls. But we have a generation that does nothing but text.

They are different than I am. I am a little bit different than LAMAR. Every generation is going to be different. But walk in a classroom today, and the first thing a teacher says is, Open your book to page 44. Yet in between the covers of a book we have a generation that has never delved into it. They have gone between the covers of their iPad, their Kindle, their PDA in their pockets. They read books, they play games, but they do it in a different way.

It is time for us to recognize the fact that they learn differently because they communicate differently. Our ability is to take somebody my age who still has a passion for the classroom and to change the way they teach

through how we take them through continuous education. You see, effectiveness is, in part, connecting with the people we are trying to teach. If we do that in the right way, we are going to be successful.

I am not trying to create the model in Washington and to say to the States and localities: Here is the only way you can do it. We are trying to give them the flexibility of the money, and let them design the programs they think will work. Again, with that, though, it requires us to let go of that power of accountability. There is no reason for Washington to be accountable for every K-12 system in this country. We can be a partner, and I think the appropriate role is a financial partner. But as to accountability, I do not want to be in Washington determining whether a school is a pass or a fail or whether a teacher is highly qualified. At best, it is arbitrary that we would come up with something.

I want to empower communities, I want to empower parents, I want to empower the business community to say: You determine success and failure. I want to empower principals and administrators: You determine whether teachers are qualified.

I do not want to sit in Washington and define how pharmacists who have lost their passion to work in a drugstore cannot shift over and become chemistry teachers in a high school because I have determined they are not qualified to do it. Yet, day in and day out, I would go into the pharmacy, and I would allow them to compound drugs for me. But they cannot go in a classroom and explain to kids how that works or, more importantly, how the interaction of compounds actually happens. That is not my role. It is not our role. Our role is to encourage, by making sure the tools are there for those closest to the problem to come up with solutions.

Well, what we did last week was a minor step in the right direction. I hope my colleagues will look at the legislation and will entertain cosponsoring it. I hope the Secretary of Education will look at it, even though we have had conversations that have continued since the first of the year, and we have a ranking member and a chairman engaged in the reauthorization of elementary and secondary education right now. I hope we influence their ability to get some type of an agreement.

But I think it is also important to understand that within the context of this issue are things that all of us know work. Let me give you a couple examples.

Senator KIRK introduced a bill on expansion of charter schools. Why is that important? It is not important because we simply want to create competition with the public model. Charter schools have become an incubator of new ideas, of new ways to teach.

In Houston, TX, some former Teach for America students created KIPP

Academy and immediately had such success that they exported KIPP Academy to New York. Their intent was to go from New York to Atlanta, and somehow they happened to stop in Northampton County, NC, in a little town called Gaston. It is in the middle of nowhere. But like all of North Carolina, it is beautiful. Its students are at risk. There is no economic driver in that county. But for some reason, KIPP stopped there and created a school. Now we have taken underperforming students and through KIPP all of them excel.

I can take you to Charlotte, NC, where KIPP finally found a home and was located next door to the elementary school. There is no way anybody can claim they draw from a different population. They draw from the same school neighborhood. Yet if we compare KIPP to the traditional elementary school next door, the performance of those students is off the charts. At some point, we have to look at it and say: This model works. How do we replicate it? But we are hung up in that one is public and one is charter.

Well, let me tell you, if we could replicate all of them to be KIPP, I would not care what we call them, and I would care less about how we funded them. I would only care about the outcome, how many students have the education foundation we need. In KIPP's case, it is almost 100 percent.

One big component of KIPP is the fact that they plug in to Teach for America graduates, teachers who enter the system knowing that for a period of time their agreement is they are going into at-risk areas; they are going in dealing with students "somebody" has deemed hard to complete the process. They go in with a different passion. They do not go in surprised with the makeup of the students in their classroom on the first day. They go in expecting this job to be tough, knowing their creativity and their innovation is going to be challenged.

What we have found so far is that for those Teach for America graduates, they end up staying longer than, in fact, the contractual period of time. They find it is much easier, but also much more satisfying, to take the most at risk and to make sure they have that education foundation that is needed.

That is incorporated into these bills. It is not just left to a simple line item that, in this particular case, I think, has been zeroed out in the President's budget. But it can be incorporated into this where we cannot only fund but we can expand Teach for America. With Senator KIRK's bill we can expand what KIPP is doing. We can challenge other individuals in other areas of the country to create KIPP-like models that work.

My challenge today is to assure all Members of the Senate and all Americans. Our kids deserve us to try. We have been dictating from Washington for decades, and we continue to see 30-

plus percent of our kids not reach that goal line. If they do, they do it in a way that is not necessarily advantageous to their future.

If we want our country to continue to prosper, if we want to continue to be the innovator of the world, then we have to create a pool, a generation of kids, where 100 percent of them are prepared to compete. I think that is exactly why Senator ALEXANDER stated he was willing to give up the rein of leadership, to be more integrally involved in the solutions that are crafted on this floor and in this Congress. That is why I said earlier, America has benefited because we have people such as LAMAR ALEXANDER here.

I am convinced that over the next several months, the reauthorization of elementary and secondary education will be front and center. I can only ask my colleagues that they spend the time looking at some of the suggestions that are on the table already. Authorship means nothing to me. It is outcome. Change the bill in a way that still stays within this framework—I will be a cosponsor of anything. Start to make Washington more dominant in the control of how the money is used or what the programs look like—I have been there. We have tried that. Not only does it not work, educators have told us it is increasingly more frustrating for them and they will drop out of the system.

We have to create a system that is a magnet for talent, a magnet for people who are as passionate as LAMAR ALEXANDER, something that gives us hope in the future that our kids have a better chance of succeeding than they have had over the past few decades. I think the Empowering Local Educational Decision Making Act of 2011 is a start, and I think the next generation is worth the investment of time on the part of our Members to look at this legislation and to get behind it.

I thank the Acting President pro tempore and yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FEMA FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, I would like to talk a little about the upcoming FEMA bill. As I understand it, the House intends to send us a CR with FEMA funding only at the level of \$3.65 billion, which is a level that is completely inadequate to meet FEMA's needs. They intend to put \$1 billion in for 2011, which is more than is actually needed in 2011, but then they ask that it be paid for with \$1.5 billion, which is not the way mathematics is supposed to work.